

*NOTWARY'S*  
TRAGEDY OF  
VENICE PRESERV'D;  
OR,  
A PLOT DISCOVER'D,  
REVISED BY  
J. P. KEMBLE,  
AND ACTED BY  
*THEIR MAJESTIES' SERVANTS,*  
AT THE  
THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.

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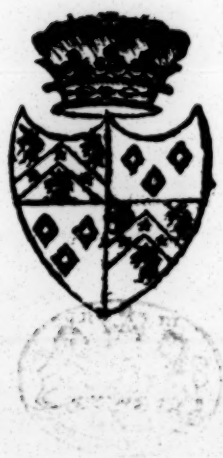


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[ Price One Shilling. ]



# DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

## M E N.

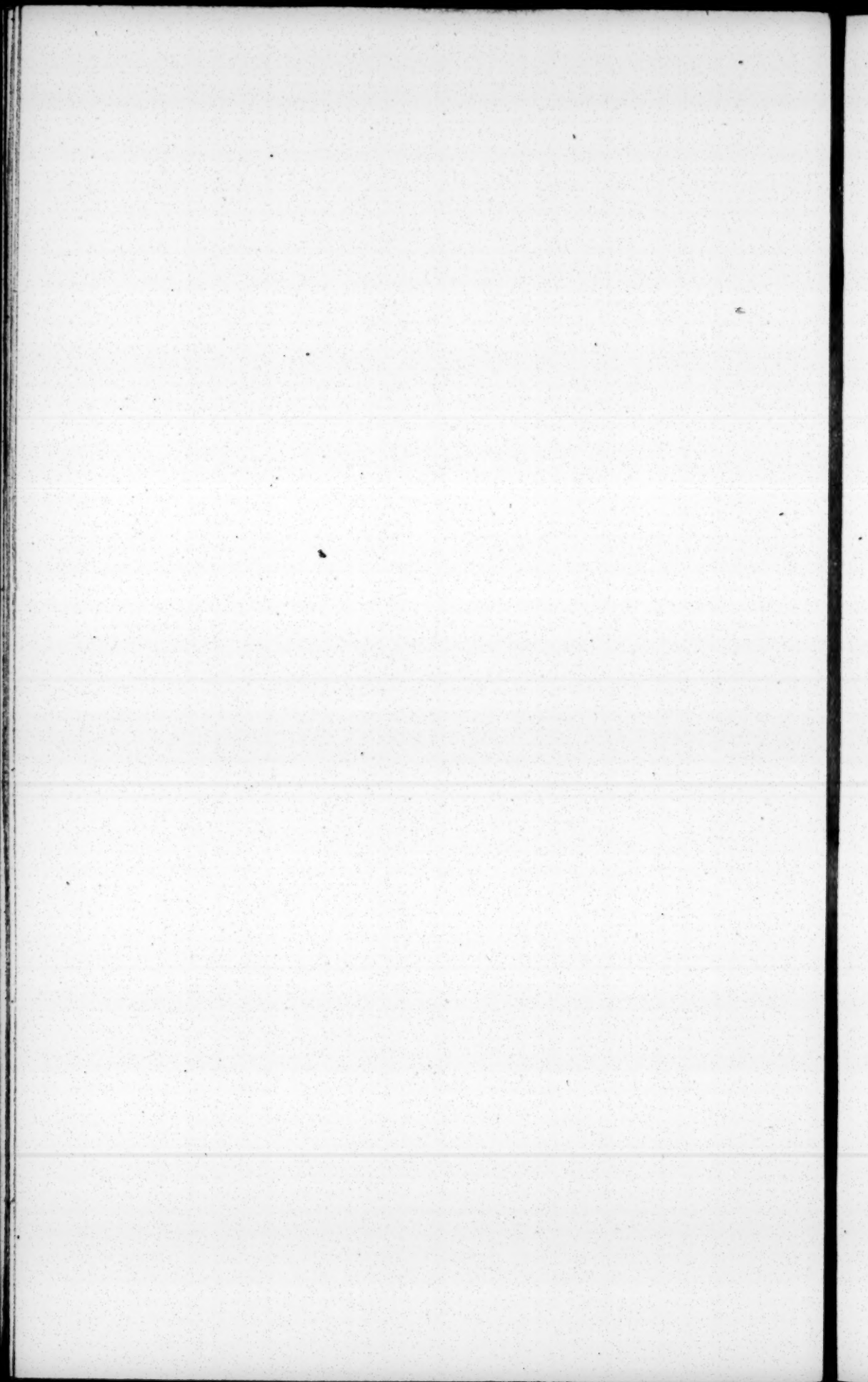
Duke of Venice,	-	-	Mr. MADDOCKS,
Priuli,	-	-	Mr. AICKIN,
Bedamar,	-	-	Mr. WHITFIELD,
Jaffier,	-	-	Mr. KEMBLE,
Pierre,	-	-	Mr. BENSLEY,
Renault,	-	-	Mr. PACKER,
Elliot,	-	-	Mr. CAULFIELD,
Spinofa,	-	-	Mr. BENSON,
Theodore,	-	-	Mr. COOKE,
Mezzana,	-	-	Mr. ROFFEY,
Durand,	-	-	Mr. BOIMAISON,
Captain of the Guard,	-		Mr. PHILLIMORE.
Officer,	-	-	Mr. TRUEMAN,

## W O M E N.

Belvidera,	-	-	Mrs. SIDDONS,
Attendants on Belvidera,			{ Miss TIDSWELL.
			{ Mrs. JONES.

THE COUNCIL.—GUARDS.—EXECUTIONER.

SCENE, VENICE.





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# VENICE PRESERV'D;

OR;

## A PLOT DISCOVER'D.

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### ACT I.

SCENE, St. Mark's.

*Enter Priuli and Jaffer.*

PRIULI.

**N**O more! I'll hear no more! begone and leave me.  
*Jaff.* Not hear me! By my sufferings but you shall!  
My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch  
You think me. Patience! where's the distance throws  
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak  
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me?

*Pri.* Have you not wrong'd me?

*Jaff.* Could my nature e'er  
Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrongs,  
I need not now thus low have bent myself  
To gain a hearing from a cruel father.  
Wrong'd you!

*Pri.* Yes, wrong'd me! In the nicest point,  
The honour of my house, you've done me wrong.  
You may remember (for I now will speak,  
And urge its baseness) when you first came home  
From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on

A2

By

By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation,  
 Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you ;  
 Courted, and sought to raise you to your merits :  
 My house, my table, nay, my fortune too,  
 My very self was yours; you might have us'd me  
 To your best service ; like an open friend  
 I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine :  
 When in requital of my best endeavours,  
 You treacherously practis'd to undo me ;  
 Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,  
 My only child, and stole her from my bosom.  
 Oh ! Belvidera !

*Jaff.* 'Tis to me you owe her :  
 Childless you had been else, and in the grave  
 Your name extinct ; no more Priuli heard of.  
 You may remember, scarce five years are past,  
 Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see  
 The Adriatic wedded by our duke ;  
 And I was with you : your unskilful pilot  
 Dash'd us upon a rock ; when to your boat  
 You made for safety : enter'd first yourself ;  
 Th'affrighted Belvidera, following next,  
 As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,  
 Was by a wave wash'd off into the deep :  
 When instantly I plung'd into the sea,  
 And buffeting the billows to her rescue  
 Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.  
 Like a rich conquest, in one hand I bore her,  
 And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,  
 That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.  
 I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :  
 Indeed you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude  
 'Rose in her soul : for from that hour she lov'd me,  
 'Till for her life she paid me with herself.

*Pri.* You stole her from me ; like a thief you stole her,  
 At dead of night ; that cursed hour you chose  
 To rifle me of all my heart held dear.  
 May all your joys in her prove false, like mine ;  
 A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,  
 Attend you both ; continual discord make  
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous ; still

May

VENICE PRESERV'D

7

May the hard hand of a vexatious need  
Oppress and grind you ; till at last you find  
The curse of disobedience all your portion !

*Jaff.* Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;  
Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves  
With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty ;  
May he live to prove more gentle than his grandfire,  
And happier than his father !

*Pri.* Rather live  
To bait thee for his bread, and din your ears  
With hungry cries ; whilst his unhappy mother  
Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want !

*Jaff.* You talk as if 'twould please you.

*Pri.* 'Twould, by heav'n !

*Jaff.* 'Would I were in my grave !

*Pri.* And she too with thee :

For living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancers,  
I once was happy.

*Jaff.* You use me thus, because you know my soul  
Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive  
My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.  
Oh ! could my soul ever have known satiety,  
Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs  
As you upbraid me with, what hinders me  
But I might send her back to you with contumely,  
And court my fortune where she would be kinder ?

*Pri.* You dare not do't.

*Jaff.* Indeed, my lord, I dare not.  
My heart, that awes me, is too much my master :—  
Three years are past, since first our vows were plighted,  
During which time, the world must bear me witness,  
I've treated Belvidera like your daughter,  
The daughter of a senator of Venice :  
Distinction, place, attendance, and observance,  
Due to her birth, she always has commanded.  
Out of my little fortune I've done this ;  
Because (tho' hopeless e'er to win your nature)  
The world might see I lov'd her for herself ;  
Not as the heirs of the great Priuli.

*Pri.* No more.

*Jaff.* Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.  
There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,

But's



But's happier than me : for I have known  
 The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night  
 Have slept with soft content about my head,  
 And never wak'd, but to a joyful morning :  
 Yet now must fall, like a full ear of corn,  
 Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

*Pri.* Home, and be humble ; study to retrench ;  
 Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,  
 Those pageants of thy folly :  
 Reduce the glitt'ring trappings of thy wife  
 To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :  
 Then, to some suburb cottage both retire ;  
 Drudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve—  
 Home, home, I say.—

[*Exit Priuli.*]

*Jaff.* Yes, if my heart would let me—  
 This proud, this swelling heart :—home I would go,  
 But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,  
 Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors.  
 I've now not fifty ducats in the world,  
 Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin.  
 Oh ! Belvidera ! Oh ! she is my wife——  
 And we will bear our wayward fate together,  
 But ne'er know comfort more.

*Enter Pierre.*

*Pier.* My friend good-morrow.  
 How fares the honest partner of my heart ?  
 What, melancholy ! not a word to spare me ?

*Jaff.* I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damn'd starving quality,  
 Call'd honesty, got scoting in the world.

*Pier.* Why, powerful villainy first set it up,  
 For its own ease and safety. Honest men  
 Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves  
 Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains,  
 They'd starve each other ; lawyers would want practice,  
 Cut-throats rewards : each man would kill his brother  
 Himself ; none would be paid or hang'd for murder.  
 Honesty ! 'twas a cheat invented first  
 To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,  
 That fools and cowards might sit safe in power,  
 And lord it uncontroll'd above their betters.

*Jaffier.*



VENICE PRESERV'D.

*Jaff.* Then honesty's but a notion

*Pier.* Nothing else :

Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd:  
He, that pretends to most too, has least share in't.  
'Tis a ragged virtue. Honesty! no more on't.

*Jaff.* Sure thou art honest?

*Pier.* So, indeed, men think me;  
But they are mistaken, Jaffier: I am a rogue  
As well as they;  
A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain as thou see'st me.  
'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;  
I steal from no man; would not cut a throat  
To gain admission to a great man's purse,  
Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend  
To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter  
A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch beneath  
Yet, Jaffier, for all this I am a villain. [me;

*Jaff.* A villain!

*Pier.* Yes, a most notorious villain;  
To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures,  
And own myself a man: to see our senators  
Cheat the deluded people with a shew  
Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.  
They say, by them our hands are free from fetters;  
Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;  
Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;  
Drive us, like wrecks, down the rough tide of power,  
Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction.  
All that bear this are villains, and I one,  
Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,  
And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,  
That make us slaves, and tell us, 'tis our charter.

*Jaff.* I think no safety can be here for virtue,  
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live  
In such a wretched state as this of Venice;  
Where all agree to spoil the public good,  
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

*Pier.* We've neither safety, unity nor peace, my friend,  
For the foundation's lost of common good;  
Justice is lame, as well as blind, amongst us;  
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)

B

Serve

Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,  
 That every day starts up, t' enslave us deeper.  
 Now could this glorious cause but find out friends  
 To do it right, Oh, Jaffier! then might'st thou  
 Not wear those seals of woe upon thy face;  
 The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,  
 And learn to value such a son as thou art.  
 I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

*Jaff.* Curs'd be the cause, tho' I, thy friend, be part  
 Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom, [on't:  
 For I am us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps  
 May find a way to sweeten't to thy spirit.

*Pier.* Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge—

*Jaff.* Then from thee  
 Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship,  
 Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,  
 Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

*Pier.* Then, thou art ruin'd!

*Jaff.* That I long since knew;  
 I and ill-fortune have been long acquaintance.

*Pier.* I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,  
 And found them guarded by a troop of villains;  
 The sons of public rapine were destroying.  
 They told me, by the sentence of the law,  
 They had commission to seize all thy fortune:  
 Nay more, Priuli's cruel hand hath sign'd it.  
 Here stood a ruffian with an horrid face,  
 Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,  
 Tumbled into a heap for public sale;  
 There was another making villainous jests  
 At thy undoing: he had ta'en possession  
 Of all thy ancient most domestic ornaments;  
 The very bed, which on thy wedding-night  
 Receiv'd thee to the arms of Belvidera,  
 The scene of all thy joys, was violated  
 By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,  
 And thrown amongst the common lumber.

*Jaff.* Now, thank heaven——

*Pier.* Thank heaven! for what?

*Jaff.* That I'm not worth a ducat.

*Pier.* Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of Venice  
 Where,

Where brothers, friends and fathers all are false;  
 Where there's no truth, no trust; where innocence  
 Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.  
 Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last  
 Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch  
 That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,  
 Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean'd,  
 Kindly look'd up, and at her grief grew sad,  
 As if they catch'd the sorrows that fell from her;—  
 Ev'n the lewd rabble, that were gather'd round  
 To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her,  
 Govern'd their roaring throats, and grumbled pity;  
 I could have hugg'd the greasy rogues: they pleas'd me.

*Jaff.* I thank thee for this story, from my soul;  
 Since now I know the worst that can befall me.  
 Ah, Pierre! I have a heart that could have borne  
 The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me;  
 But when I think what Belvidera feels,  
 The bitterness her tender spirits taste of,  
 I own myself a coward: bear my weakness;  
 If, throwing thus my arms about thy neck,  
 I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom.  
 Oh! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

*Pier.* Burn,  
 First, burn and level Venice to thy ruin.  
 What! starve like beggars brats, in frosty weather,  
 Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death!  
 Thou, or thy cause, shall never want assistance,  
 Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee:  
 Command my heart, thou'rt every way its master.

*Jaff.* No, there's a secret pride in bravely dying.

*Pier.* Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad;  
 Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow;  
 Revenge, the attribute of gods; they stamp'd it,  
 With their great image, on our natures. Die!  
 Consider well the cause, that calls upon thee:  
 And, if thou'rt base enough, die then. Remember,  
 Thy Belvidera suffers; Belvidera!  
 Die——damn first——What! be decently interr'd



In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust  
With stinking rogues, that rot in dirty winding-sheets,  
Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o'th' soil!

*Jaff.* Oh!

*Pier.* Well said, out with't, swear a little—

*Jaff.* Swear!

By sea and air; by earth, by heav'n and hell,  
I will revenge my Belvidera's tears.

Hark thee, my friend—Priuli—is—a senator.

*Pier.* A dog.

*Jaff.* Agreed.

*Pier.* Shoot him.

*Jaff.* With all my heart.

No more; where shall we meet at night?

*Pier.* I'll tell thee;

On the Rialto, every night at twelve,

I take my evening's walk of meditation;

There we two'll meet, and talk of precious mischief.

*Jaff.* Farewel.

*Pier.* At twelve.

*Jaff.* At any hour; my plagues

[*Exit Pier.*]

Will keep me waking. Tell me why, good Heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts and elegant desires,

That fill the happiest man? Ah! rather why

Didst thou not form me fordid as my fate?

Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burthens?

Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?

Is this just dealing, Nature?—Belvidera!

*Enter Belvidera.*

Poor Belvidera!

*Bel.* Lead me, lead me, my virgins,  
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge!  
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!  
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating  
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.  
Oh smile! as when our loves were in their spring,  
And cheer my fainting soul.

*Jaff.*



*Jaff.* As when our loves  
Were in their spring ! Has then my fortune chang'd thee ?  
Art thou not, Belvidera, still the same,  
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee ?  
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour ?  
Where ease my loaded heart ? Oh ! where complain ?

*Bel.* Does this appear like change, or love decaying,  
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,  
With all the resolution of strong truth !  
I joy more in thee,

Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,  
And bless'd the Gods for all her travel past.

*Jaff.* Can there in woman be such glorious faith ?  
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false !  
Oh woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee  
To temper man : we had been brutes without you !  
Angels are painted fair, to look like you :  
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven ;  
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,  
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

*Bel.* If love be treasure, we'll be wond'rous rich ;  
O ! lead me to some desert wide and wild,  
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul  
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud  
To the high Heavens, and ev'ry list'ning planet,  
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught.

*Jaff.* Oh, Belvidera ! doubly I'm a beggar :  
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.  
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,  
Is at my heels, and chases me in view.  
Can'st thou bear cold and hunger ? Can these limbs,  
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,  
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty ?  
When banish'd by our miseries abroad  
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out  
In some far climate, where our names are strangers,  
For charitable succour ; wilt thou then,  
When in a bed of straw we shrink together,  
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads,  
Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then  
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

*Bel.*

*Bel.* Oh! I will love thee, even in madness love thee;  
 Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,  
 I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart  
 Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.  
 Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,  
 Its roots our food, some cliff our habitation,  
 I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head;  
 And, as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,  
 Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love  
 Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest;  
 Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

*Jaff.* Hear this, you Heav'ns, and wonder how you made  
 Reign, reign, ye monarchs, that divide the world; [her!  
 Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know  
 Tranquility and happiness like mine;  
 Like gaudy ships, the obsequious billows fall,  
 And rise again, to lift you in your pride;  
 They wait but for a storm, and then devour you:  
 I, in my private bark already wreck'd,  
 Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,  
 That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure  
 In one dear casket, and sav'd only that,  
 Since I must wander farther on the shore,  
 Thus hug my little, but my precious store,  
 Resolv'd to scorn, and trust my fate no more, [Exeunt.

END of the FIRST ACT.

## A C T II.

SCENE, I. *the Rialto.**Enter Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* I 'M here; and thus, the shades of night around  
 I look as if all hell were in my heart, [me,  
 And I in hell. Nay, surely 'tis so with me!——  
 For every step I tread, methinks some fiend  
 Knocks at my breast, and bids it not be quiet.  
 I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,  
 Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,  
 To meet the foe of mankind in his walk.  
 Sure I'm so curs'd, that, tho' of Heav'n forsaken,  
 No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.  
 Hell, hell! why sleep'st thou?

*Enter Pierre.*

*Pier.* Sure I've staid too long:  
 The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.  
 Speak, who goes there?

*Jaff.* A dog, that comes to howl  
 At yonder moon. What's he, that asks the question?

*Pier.* A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures,  
 And ne'er betray their masters; never fawn  
 On any that they love not. Well met, friend——  
 Jaffier!

*Jaff.* The same.

*Pier.* Where's Belvidera?——

*Jaff.* For a day or two  
 I've lodg'd her privately, till I see farther  
 What fortune will do with me. Prithee, friend,  
 If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,  
 Speak not of Belvidera.——

*Pier.* Speak not of her!

*Jaff.* Oh, no! nor name her!

*Pier.* May be I wish her well.

*Jaff.*

*Jaff.* Whom well?

*Pier.* Thy wife; thy lovely Belvidera.  
I hope a man may with his friend's wife well,  
And no harm done.

*Jaff.* Y'are merry, Pierre.

*Pier.* I am so:

Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile:  
We'll all rejoice. Here's something to buy pins;  
Marriage is chargeable. *[Gives him a purse.]*

*Jaff.* I but half wish'd  
To see the devil, and he's here already.  
Well!

What must this buy? Rebellion, murder, treason?  
Tell me, which way I must be damn'd for this.

*Pier.* When last we parted, we'd no qualms like these.  
But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men  
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world  
Reform'd since our last meeting? What new miracles  
Have happen'd? Has Priuli's heart relented?  
Can he be honest?

*Jaff.* Kind Heav'n, let heavy curses  
Gall his old age, till life become his burden;  
Let him groan under't long, linger an age  
In the worst agonies and pangs of death,  
And find its ease, but late!

*Pier.* Nay, could'st thou not  
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all  
'The senate round, as to one single villain?

*Jaff.* But curses stick not: Could I kill with cursing,  
By Heaven, I know not thirty heads in Venice  
Should not be blasted. Senators should rot  
Like dogs on dunghills:—

Oh! for a curse to kill with!

*Pier.* Daggers, daggers are much better.

*Jaff.* Ha!

*Pier.* Daggers.

*Jaff.* But where are they?

*Pier.* Oh! A thousand

May be dispos'd in honest hands in Venice.

*Jaff.* Thou talk'st in clouds,

*Pier.*



*Pier.* But yet a heart, half wrong'd  
As thine has been, would find the meaning, *Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* A thousand daggers, all in honest hands!  
And have not I a friend will stick one here?

*Pier.* Yes, if I thought thou wert not to be cherish'd  
To a nobler purpose, I would be that friend;  
But thou hast better friends; friends whom thy wrongs  
Have made thy friends; friends worthy to be call'd so.  
I'll trust thee with a secret:—There are spirits  
This hour at work.—But as thou art a man,  
Whom I have pick'd and chosen from the world,  
Swear that thou wilt be true to what I utter;  
And when I've told thee that which only gods,  
And men like gods, are privy to, then swear  
No chance or change shall wrest it from thy bosom.

*Jaff.* When thou would'st bind me, is there need of oaths?  
Is coward, fool, or villain in my face?  
If I seem none of these, I dare believe  
Thou would'st not use me in a little cause;  
For I am fit for honour's toughest task;  
Nor ever yet found fooling was my province:  
And for a villainous, inglorious enterprize,—  
I know thy heart so well, I dare lay mine  
Before thee, set it to what point thou wilt.

*Pier.* Nay, 'tis a cause thou wilt be fond of, *Jaffier*;  
For it is founded on the noblest basis;  
Our liberties, our natural inheritance.  
We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't;  
Openly act a deed the world may gaze  
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

*Jaff.* For liberty!

*Pier.* For liberty, my friend.  
Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,  
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again;  
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,  
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward;  
All Venice free, and every growing merit  
Succeed to its just right; fools shall be pull'd  
From wisdom's seat; those baleful unclean birds,  
Those lazy owls, who (perch'd near fortune's top)  
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings

To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues, that would rise  
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

*Jaff.* What can I do?

*Pier.* Can'st thou not kill a senator?

*Jaff.* By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge  
Were to be had; and the brave story warms me.

*Pier.* Swear then!

*Jaff.* I do, by all those glittering stars,  
And yon great ruling planet of the night;  
By all good spirits above, and ill below;  
By love and friendship, dearer than my life,  
No pow'r nor death shall make me false to thee.

*Pier.* Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.  
A council's held hard by, where the destruction  
Of this great empire's hatching: there I'll lead thee.  
But be a man! for thou'rt to mix with men  
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,  
And rule it when 'tis wildest.

*Jaff.* I give thee thanks  
For this kind warning.—Yes, I'll be a man;  
And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou see'st my fears  
Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine  
Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.—  
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chase  
All little thoughts, all tender human follies,  
Out of my bosom:—Vengeance shall have room;  
Revenge—

*Pier.* And liberty!

*Jaff.* Revenge! revenge!—

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE II.

*A room in the house of Aquilina.*

*Enter Renault.*

*Ren.* Why was my choice ambition? the worst ground  
A wretch can build on! 'Tis, indeed, at distance,  
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;  
The height delights us, and the mountain-top

Looks

Looks beautiful, because 'tis nigh to Heav'n;  
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,  
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.  
Who's there?

*Enter Spinosa.*

*Spin.* Renault, good-morrow; for by this time  
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,  
And weighs up morning. Has the clock struck twelve?

*Ren.* Yes; Clocks will go as they are set; but man,  
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain:  
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness  
In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curse  
Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,  
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

*Spin.* Hell seize that soul amongst us, it can frighten!

*Ren.* What's then the cause that I am here alone?  
Why are we not together?

*Enter Elliot.*

O, Sir, welcome!  
You are an Englishman: when treason's hatching,  
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-hand,  
In what whore's lap have you been lolling?  
Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,  
Beef and a sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

*Ell.* Frenchman, you are saucy.

*Ren.* How!

*Enter Bedamar, Theodore, Durand, and Mezzana.*

*Bed.* At difference; fie!  
Is this a time for quarrels? Thieves and rogues  
Fall out and brawl: should men of your high calling,  
Men separated by the choice of Providence  
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here  
In this assembly as in one great jewel,  
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on;

C 2

Should



Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles?

*Ren.* Boys!

*Bed.* Renault, thy hand.

*Ren.* I thought I'd given my heart  
Long since to every man that mingles here;  
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,  
That can't forgive my froward age its weakness.

*Bed.* Elliot, thou once had'st virtue. I have seen  
Thy stubborn temper bend with god-like goodness,  
Not half thus courted: 'Tis thy nation's glory  
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.  
One more embrace, my friends—  
United thus, we are the mighty engine  
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.  
Totters it not already?

*Ell.* 'Would 'twere tumbling.

*Bed.* Nay, it shall down: this night we seal its ruin.

*Enter Pierre.*

Oh, Pierre! thou art welcome.  
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st  
Lovely dreadful; and the fate of Venice  
Seems on thy sword already. Oh, my Mars!  
The poets that first feign'd a god of war,  
Sure prophesy'd of thee.

*Pier.* Friends, was not Brutus,  
(I mean that Brutus, who in open senate  
Stabb'd the first Cæsar that usurp'd the world)  
A gallant man?

*Ren.* Yes, and Cataline too;  
Tho' story wrong his fame: for he conspired  
To prop the reeling glory of his country;  
His cause was good.

*Bed.* And ours as much above it,  
As, Renault, thou'rt superior to Cethegus,  
Or Pierre to Cassius.

*Pier.* Then to what we aim at.  
When do we start? or must we talk for ever?

*Bed.* No, Pierre, the deed's near birth; fate seems to have  
The business up and given it to our care;

[set  
I hope



I hope there's not a heart or hand amongst us,  
But what is firm and ready.

*Elli.* All.

We'll die with Bedamar.

*Bed.* O men,

Matchless, as will your glory be hereafter:  
The game is for a matchless prize, if won;  
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

*Pier.* Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,  
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide  
A battle for the freedom of the world:  
This wretched state has starv'd them in its service;  
And, by your bounty quicken'd, they're resolv'd  
To serve your glory, and revenge their own:  
They've all their different quarters in this city,  
Watch for the alarm, and grumble 'tis so tardy.

*Bed.* I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied diligence  
Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease;  
After this night it is resolv'd we meet  
No more, till Venice owns us for her lords.

*Pier.* How lovely the Adriatic whore,  
Dress'd in her flames, will shine? Devouring flames!  
Such as shall burn her to the wat'ry bottom,  
And hiss in her foundation.

*Bed.* Now if any

Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,  
Have friends or interest he would wish to save,  
Let it be told: the general doom is seal'd;  
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,  
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

*Pier.* I must confess, you there have touch'd my weakness,  
I have a friend; hear it: O, such a friend,  
My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I'll tell you:  
He knows the very business of this hour;  
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it:  
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,  
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

*Ren.* How! all betray'd!

*Pier.* No—I've dealt nobly with you,  
I've brought my all into the public stock:  
I'd but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you:

Receive

Receive and cherish him; or if, when seen  
 And search'd, you find him worthless; as my tongue  
 Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,  
 To ease your fears, I wear a dagger here  
 Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.  
 Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

*Enter Jaffier, with a Dagger in his hand.*

*Bed.* His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

*Jaff.* I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd  
 I dare approach this place of fatal councils;  
 But I'm amongst you, and by heav'n it glads me  
 To see so many virtues thus united  
 To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.  
 Command this steel, if you would have it quiet,  
 Into this breast; but, if you think it worthy  
 To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,  
 Send me into the curs'd assembled senate;  
 It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there:—  
 Would you behold this city flaming? here's  
 A hand, shall bear a lighted torch at noon  
 To th' arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

*Ren.* You talk this well, Sir.

*Jaff.* Nay, by Heaven, I'll do this.  
 Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces;  
 You fear me villain; and, indeed, it's odd,  
 To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,  
 Of matters that have been so well debated;  
 But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with counsels:  
 I hate this senate, am a foe to Venice,  
 A friend to none, but men resolv'd, like me,  
 To push on mischief.—Oh! did you but know me,  
 I need not talk thus!

*Bed.* Pierre, I must embrace him;  
 My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

*Ren.* I never lov'd these huggers.

*Jaff.* Still I see  
 The cause delights me not; your friends survey me  
 As I were dangerous——But I come arm'd  
 Against all doubts, and to your trust will give

A pledge

A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for.—  
My Belvidera!—Hoa! my Belvidera!—

*Bed.* What wonder next?

*Jaff.* Let me intreat you, Sirs,  
As I have henceforth hope to call you friends,  
That all, but the ambassador, and this  
Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,  
Withdraw a while, to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but Bed. Ren. Jaff. Pier.*]

*Bed.* Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

*Jaff.* My Belvidera! Belvidera!

[*Belvidera Within.*]

*Belv.* Who,  
Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?  
That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,  
And fill my ears with the soft breath of love.

*Enter Belvidera.*

Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

*Jaff.* Indeed, 'tis late.

*Belv.* Alas! where am I? whither is't you lead me?  
Methinks I read distraction in your face!  
You shake and tremble too! your blood runs cold!—  
Heav'ns guard my love, and blest his heart with patience!

*Jaff.* That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,  
Who has ordain'd it so, that thou and I,—  
Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,  
And I, the wretched'st of the race of man,—  
This very hour, without one tear, must part.

*Belv.* Part! must we part? Oh, am I then forsaken?  
Why drag you from me? Whither are you going?  
My dear! my life! my love!

*Jaff.* Oh, friends!—

*Belv.* Speak to me.

*Jaff.* Take her from my heart;  
She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose;  
I charge you take her; but with tender'st care  
Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows.

*Ren.* Rise, Madam, and command amongst your servants.

*Jaff.* To you, Sirs, and your honours, I bequeath her,  
And with her this; whene'er I prove unworthy,—

[*Gives a dagger.*  
You



You know the rest,—then strike it to her heart;  
 And tell her, he, who three whole happy years  
 Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated  
 The passionate vows of still increasing love,  
 Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

*Belv.* O! thou unkind one!—  
 Have I deserv'd this from you?  
 Look on me, tell me, speak, thou dear deceiver:  
 If I am false, accuse me; but if true,  
 Don't, prithee, don't in poverty forsake me,  
 But pity the sad heart that's torn with parting.  
 Yet hear me, yet recall me.—*Jaffier! Jaffier!*

[*Exeunt Ren. Bed. and Belv. Jaff. and Pierre*]

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ACT III.

SCENE I.

*A Room in the House of Aquilina.*

*Enter Belvidera.*

*Bel* **I**'M sacrific'd! I'm sold! betray'd to shame!  
 Inevitable ruin has inclos'd me!  
 He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it;  
 Left me! Undone me! Oh, that I could hate him!  
 Where shall I go? Oh, whither, whither wander?

*Enter Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* Can Belvidera want a resting-place,  
 When these poor arms are open to receive her?  
 There was a time,——

*Bel.* Yes, yes, there was a time,  
 When Belvidera's tears, her cries, and sorrows,  
 Were not despis'd; when, if she chanc'd to sigh,  
 Or look but sad, there was indeed a time,  
 When Jaffier would have ta'en her in his arms,  
 Eas'd her declining head upon his breast,  
 And never left her, till he found the cause.  
 But well I know why you forsake me thus;  
 I am no longer fit to bear a share

*In*



In your concernments. My weak female virtue  
Must not be trusted; 'tis too frail and tender.

*Jaff.* Oh, Porcia, Porcia! What a soul was thine!

*Bel.* That Porcia was a woman; and when Brutus,  
Big with the fate of Rome (Heav'n guard thy safety!)  
Conceal'd from her the labours of his mind;  
She let him see her blood was great as his,  
Flow'd from a spring as noble, and a heart  
Fit to partake his troubles as his love.  
Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower;  
Thou gav'st last night in parting with me; strike it  
Here to my heart; and, as the blood flows from it,  
Judge if it run not pure as Cato's daughter's.

*Jaff.* Oh, Belvidera!

*Bel.* Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain?

*Jaff.* Ha! a villain?

*Bel.* Yes, to a villain! Why at such an hour  
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches,  
That look as hell had drawn them into league?  
Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,  
Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies?  
*To you, Sirs, and to your honours I bequeath her,  
And with her this: Whene'er I prove unworthy—  
You know the rest—then strike it to her heart.*  
Oh! why's that rest conceal'd from me? Must I  
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?  
For such I know I am; that's all my value:  
But by the love and loyalty I owe thee,  
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves;  
Straight to the senate, tell them all I know,  
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

*Jaff.* Is this the Roman virtue; this the blood  
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter?  
Would she have e'er betray'd her Brutus?

*Bel.* No:

For Brutus trusted her. Wert thou so kind,  
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee?

*Jaff.* I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.  
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me farther;  
Think I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature;  
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of,

D

Into

Into vile tears, and despicable forrows:  
Then if thou should'st betray me!——

*Bel.* Shall I swear?

*Jaff.* No; do not swear; I would not violate  
Thy tender nature with so rude a bond:  
But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,  
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast;  
I've bound myself, by all the strictest sacraments,  
Divine and human.——

*Bel.* Speak!

*Jaff.* To kill thy father——

*Bel.* My father!

*Jaff.* Nay, the throats of the whole senate  
Shall bleed my Belvidera:—He amongst us,  
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,  
Is damn'd.

*Bel.* Oh!

*Jaff.* Have a care, and shrink not even in thought:  
For, if thou dost,——

*Bel.* I know it; thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike thy sword into this bosom: lay me  
Dead on the earth; and then thou wilt be safe.  
Murder my father! Tho' his cruel nature  
Has persecuted me to my undoing;  
Driven me to basest wants; can I behold him,  
With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age?  
The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd?  
And canst thou shed the blood, that gave me being?  
Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country?  
Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,  
Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers?  
Join

With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,  
To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep?

*Jaff.* Thou wrongst me, Belvidera! I've engag'd  
With men of souls, fit to reform the ills  
Of all mankind: there's not a heart amongst them,  
But's stout as death, yet honest, as the nature  
Of man first made, ere fraud and vice were fashions.

*Bel.* What's he, to whose curs'd hands last night thou  
Was that well done? Oh! I could tell a story, [gav' st me?  
Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den, And

And make it rage with terrifying fury.

*Jaff.* Speak on, I charge thee.

*Bel.* Oh, my love ! if e'er

Thy Belvidera's peace deserv'd thy care,

Remove me from this place. Last night, last night !

*Jaff.* Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

*Bel.* No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,

Left in the power of that old son of mischief ;

No sooner was I laid on my sad bed,

But that vile wretch approach'd me.—

Oh, how I wept and sigh'd !

And shrunk and trembled ! wish'd in vain for him

That should protect me ! 'Thou, alas ! wast gone.

*Jaff.* Patience, sweet Heav'n, till I make vengeance  
sure !

*Bel.* He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou gav'st him,  
And with upbraiding smiles, he said, *Behold it :*

*This is the pledge of a false Husband's love :*

And in my arms then press'd, and would have clasp'd me ;

But with my cries I scar'd his coward heart,

Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell.—

These are thy friends ! with these thy life, thy honour,

Thy love, all's stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

*Jaff.* No more ; I charge thee keep this secret close :

Clear up thy sorrows ; look, as if thy wrongs

Were all forgot ; and treat him like a friend,

As no complaint were made. No more ; retire,

Retire my life ; and doubt not of my honour ;

I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love.

*Bel.* Oh ! should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt  
In anger leave me, and return no more.

*Jaff.* Return no more ! I would not live without thee  
Another night to purchase the creation,

*Bel.* When shall we meet again ?

*Jaff.* Anon, at twelve,

I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms,

Come, like the travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

*Bel.* Indeed !

*Jaff.* By all our loves.

*Belv.* 'Tis hard to part :

D 2

Farewell ;



Farewell ; remember twelve.

[*Exit Bel.*]

*Jaff.* Let Heav'n forget me,  
When I remember not thy truth, thy love !

*Enter Pierre.*

*Pier.* *Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* Who calls ?

*Pier.* A friend, that could have wish'd  
T' have found thee otherwise employ'd. What, hunt  
A wife on the dull foil ! Sure a staunch husband  
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never,  
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections ?  
What feminine tales hast thou been list'ning to,  
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs and tooth-ach, got  
By thin-sol'd shoes ? Damnation ! that a fellow,  
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction  
Of a whole people, should sneak thus in corners  
To waste his time, and fool his mind with love.

*Jaff.* May not a man then trifle out an hour  
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling ?

*Pier.* Not in a cause like ours.

*Jaff.* Then, friend, our cause  
Is in a damn'd condition ; for, I'll tell thee,  
That canker-worm, call'd Lechery, has touch'd it ;  
'Tis tainted vilely. Would'st thou think it ? Renault  
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)  
Loves simple fornication like a priest ;  
I found him out for watering at my wife ;  
He visited her last night, like a kind guardian.  
Faith, she has some temptations ; that's the truth on't.

*Pier.* He durst not wrong his trust.

*Jaff.* 'Twas something late though,  
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

*Pier.* Was she in bed ?

*Jaff.* Yes, faith ! in virgin sheets,  
White as her bosom, Pierre, dish'd neatly up,—  
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste.

*Pier.* Patience guide me !  
He us'd no violence ?

*Jaff.* No, no ; out on't, violence !  
Play'd with her neck ; brush'd her with his grey beard ;  
Struggl'd



Struggl'd and touz'd; tickl'd her, till she squeak'd a little,  
May be, or so,—but not a jot of violence.

*Pier.* Damn him.

*Jaff.* Ay, so say I: but hush, no more on't.  
Sure it is near the hour  
We all should meet for our concluding orders:  
Will the ambassador be here in person?

*Pier.* No, he has sent commission to that villain Renault,

To give the executing charge:  
I'd have thee be a man, if possible,  
And keep thy temper; for a brave revenge  
Ne'er comes too late.

*Jaff.* Fear not, I am cool as patience.

*Pier.* He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall;  
His thoughts seem full.

*Jaff.* Prithee, retire, and leave me  
With him alone: I'll put him to some trial;  
See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

*Pier.* Be careful then.

*Jaff.* Nay, never doubt, but trust me. [*Exit Pierre.*]  
What, be a devil, take a damning oath  
For shedding native blood! Can there be sin  
In merciful repentance? Oh, this villain!

*Enter Renault.*

*Ren.* Perverse and peevish! What a slave is man  
To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him!  
Dispatch the Tool her husband—that were well.  
Who's there?

*Jaff.* A man.

*Ren.* My friend, my near ally,  
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is very

*Jaff.* Sir, are you sure of that? [*well.*]  
Stands she in perfect health? Beats her pulse even?  
Neither too hot nor cold?

*Ren.* What means that question?

*Jaff.* Oh! Women have fantastic constitutions,  
Inconstant in their wishes, always wavering,  
And never fix'd. Was it not boldly done,

Even

Even at first sight, to trust the thing I lov'd  
(A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce  
And vigorous as thine? but thou art honest.

*Ren.* Who dares accuse me?

*Jaff.* Curs'd be he that doubts  
Thy virtue! I have try'd it, and declare,  
Were I to chuse a guardian of my honour,  
I'd put it into thy keeping; for I know thee.

*Ren.* Know me!

*Jaff.* Ay, know thee. There's no falshood in thee;  
Thou look'st just as thou art. Let us embrace.  
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine?

*Ren.* You dare not do't.

*Jaff.* You lie, Sir.

*Ren.* How!

*Jaff.* No more,  
'Tis a base world, and must reform; that's all.

*Enter Spinosa, Theodore, Elliot, Durand, and Mezzana.*

*Ren.* Spinosa, Theodore, you are welcome.

*Spin.* You are trembling, Sir.

*Ren.* 'Tis a cold night, indeed; I am aged;  
Full of decay and natural infirmities?

*Enter Pierre.*

We shall be warm, my friends, I hope, to-morrow.

*Pier.* 'Twas not well done; thou should'st have stroak'd  
And not have gall'd him. [him,

*Jaff.* Damn him, let him chew on't.  
Heav'n! Where am I? beset with cursed fiends,  
That wait to damn me! What a devil's man,  
When he forgets his nature——hush, my heart.

*Ren.* My friends, 'tis late: are we assembled all?

*Spi.* All; all.

*Ren.* Oh! you're brave men I find,  
Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons.  
To-morrow's rising sun must see you all  
Deck'd in your honours. Are the soldiers ready?

*Pier.* All, all.

*Ren.* You, Durand, with your thousand, must possess  
St.

St. Mark's; you, Captain, know your charge already;  
'Tis to secure the ducal palace.

Be all this done with the least tumult possible,  
'Till in each place you post sufficient guards:  
Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

*Jaff.* Oh, reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain!

*Ren.* During this execution, Durand, you  
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast;  
And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon  
That may command the streets.

This done, we'll give the general alarm,  
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates;  
Then fire the city round in several places,  
Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)  
Batter to ruin. But above all I charge you,  
Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,  
Name nor condition; if there lives a senator  
After to-morrow, though the dullest rogue  
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends.  
If possible, let's kill the very name  
Of senator, and bury it in blood.

*Jaff.* Merciless, horrid slave—Ay, blood enough!  
Shed blood enough, old Renault! how thou charm'st me.

*Ren.* But one thing more, and then farewell, till fate  
Join us again or separate us ever:

Let us all remember,  
We wear no common cause upon our swords.  
Let each man think, that on his single virtue  
Depends the good and fame of all the rest;  
Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.  
You droop, Sir.

*Jaff.* No; with most profound attention  
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

*Ren.* Let's consider,  
That we destroy oppression, avarice,  
A people nurs'd up equally with vices  
And loathsome lusts, which nature most abhors,  
And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

*Jaff.* Oh, Belvidera! take me to thy arms,  
And shew me where's my peace, for I have lost it. [*Exit Jaff.*]

*Ren.* Without the least remorse then, let's resolve



With fire and sword t'exterminate these tyrants,  
Under whose weight this wretched country labours.

*Pier.* And may those Powers above that are propitious  
To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it.

*Ren.* Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,  
Should there, my friends, be found among us one  
False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,  
What vengeance, were enough for such a villain?

*Elli.* Death here without repentance, Hell hereafter.

*Ren.* Let that be my lot, if, as here I stand,  
Lifted by fate among her darling sons,  
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all  
The strictest ties of nature,  
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground for fear,  
He meant foul play; may this right hand drop from me,  
If I'd not hazard all my future peace,  
And stab him to the heart before you. Who,

Who would do less? Would'st thou not, Pierre, the same?

*Pier.* You've singled me, Sir, out for this hard question,  
As if 'twere started only for my sake?

Am I the thing you fear? Here, here's my bosom,  
Search it with all your swords. Am I a traitor?

*Ren.* No: But I fear your late commended friend  
Is little less. Come, Sirs, 'tis now no time  
To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffier?

*Spin.* He left the room just now, in strange disorder.

*Ren.* Nay, there is danger in him: I observ'd him;  
During the time I took for explanation,  
He was transported from most deep attention  
To a confusion which he could not smother.  
What's requisite for safety must be done  
With speedy execution; he remains  
Yet in our power: I, for my own part, wear  
A dagger——

*Pier.* Well.

*Ren.* And I could wish it——

*Pier.* Where?

*Ren.* Bury'd in his heart.

*Pier.* Away! we're yet all friends.  
No more of this! t'will breed ill blood among us.

*Spin*



*Spin.* Let us all draw our swords, and search the house.  
Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding  
O'er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

*Pier.* Who talks of killing? Who's he'll shed the blood  
That's dear to me? Is't you? or you, or you, Sir?  
What, not one speak! how you stand gaping all  
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there!  
Yet not a word! Then, Sir, I'll tell you a secret;  
Suspicion's but at best a coward's virtue. [*To Renault.*]

*Ken.* A coward! ———

*Pier.* Put up thy sword, old man;  
Thy hand shakes at it. Come let's heal this breach;  
I am too hot: we yet may all live friends.

*Spin.* Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

*Pier.* Again! Who's that?

*Spin.* 'Twas I.

*Theod.* And I.

*Ren.* And I.

*Spin.* And all.

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

*Pier.* One such word more, by Heav'n, I'll to the senate;  
And hang ye all, like dogs, in clusters.

Why peep your coward swords half out their sheaths?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die; and yet dare talk of killing.

*Ren.* Go to the senate, and betray us! haste!

Secure thy wretched life; We fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

*Pier.* That's rank falsehood.

Fear'st thou not death? Fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had Jaffier's wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.

Faugh—how that stinks. [*Exit. Renault*]

Away, disperse all to your several charges;

And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you.

I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst for;

And you shall see him venture for you fairly—

Hence! hence, I say.

*Spin.* I fear we have been to blame,

And done too much.

*All* Forgive us, gallant friend.

E

*Pier.*

*Pier.* Nay, now you've found  
 The way to melt, and cast me as you will.  
 Whence arose all this discord?  
 Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd!  
 How near a fall was all we'd long been building!  
 What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,  
 If one, the bravest and the best of men,  
 Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,  
 Butcher'd by those, whose cause he came to cherish!  
 Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,  
 And to your loves me better recommend,  
 That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend.  
*Exeunt.*

## END OF THE THIRD ACT.

## ACT IV.

## SCENE, a Street.

*Enter Jaffier and Belvidera.*

*Jaff.* Where dost thou lead me? Ev'ry step I move,  
 Methinks, I tread upon some mangled limb  
 Of a rack'd friend. Oh, my dear charming ruin!  
 Where are we wandering?

*Bel.* To eternal honour;  
 To do a deed shall chronicle thy name  
 Among the glorious legends of those few  
 That have sav'd sinking nations.  
 Every street

Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour;  
 And at thy feet this great inscription written,  
*Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.*

*Jaff.* Rather, remember him, who, after all  
 The sacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendship,  
 In fond compassion to a woman's tears,  
 Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,  
 To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.—  
 Why wilt thou damn me?

*Bel.*

*Bel.* Oh, inconstant man !  
 How will you promise; how will you deceive !  
 Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,  
 Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,  
 And let thy dagger do its bloody office.  
 Or, if thou think'st it nobler, let me live,  
 Till I'm a victim to the hateful will  
 Of that infernal devil.  
 Last night, my love !

*Jaff.* Name, name it not again !  
 Destruction, swift destruction,  
 Fall on my coward head, if I forgive him !

*Bel.* Delay no longer then, but to the senate,  
 And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd :  
 Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,  
 Have been prepar'd : how near's the fatal hour ;  
 Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood  
 Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn  
 Must else see shed.

*Jaff.* Oh !

*Bel.* Think what then may prove  
 My lot ; the ravisher may then come safe,  
 And, 'midst the terror of the public ruin,  
 Do a damn'd deed.

*Jaff.* By all Heav'n's powers, prophetic truth dwells  
 in thee ;  
 For every word thou speak'st strikes thro' my heart,  
 Like a new light, and shews it, how't has wander'd,—  
 Just what thou'st made me, take me, Belvidera,  
 And lead me to the place, where I'm to say  
 This bitter lesson ; where I must betray  
 My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends.—  
 Must I betray my friends ? Ah ! take me quickly ;  
 Secure me well before that thought's renew'd ;  
 If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

*Bel.* Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera ?

*Jaff.* No ; thou'rt my soul itself ; wealth, friendship,  
 All present joys, and earnest of all future, [honour  
 Are summ'd in thee.

*Enter Captain and Guards.*

*Cap.* Stand! who goes there?

*Bel.* Friends.

*Cap.* But what friends are you?

*Bel.* Friends to the senate, and the state of Venice.

*Cap.* My orders are to seize on all I find  
At this late hour, and bring 'em to the council,  
Who are now sitting.

*Jaff.* Sir, you shall be obey'd.  
Now the lot's cast, and, fate, do what thou wilt.

*[Exeunt.]*

SCENE, the Senate-House.

*Where appear sitting the Duke of Venice, Priuli, and  
nine other Senators.*

*Duke.* Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,  
Speak, why are we assembled here this night?  
What have you to inform us of, concerns  
The state of Venice' honour, or its safety?

*Pri.* Could words express the story I've to tell you,  
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears  
That fall from my old eyes; but there is a cause  
We all should weep,  
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down  
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to Heav'n:  
Heav'n knows, if yet there be an hour to come  
Ere Venice be no more.

*Duke.* How!

*Pri.* Nay, we stand  
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.  
Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy  
To massacre us all, our wives and children,  
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples  
To lay in ashes: nay, the hour too fix'd;  
The swords, for aught I know, drawn e'en this moment,  
And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands  
I had this warning; but, if we are men,

Let's



Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something  
That may inform the world, in after-ages,  
Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

[A noise within.]

*Captain (within.)* Room, room, make room for some  
prisoners—

*Enter Officer.*

*Duke.* Speak, there. What disturbance?

*Offi.* A prisoner have the guards seiz'd in the street,  
Who says, he comes to inform this reverend senate  
About the present danger.

*Duke.* Give him entrance—

*Enter Jaffier, Captain and Guards.*

Well, who are you?

*Jaff.* A villain.

'Would every man, that hears me,  
Would deal so honestly, and own his title!

*Duke.* 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd  
Against this state; and you've a share in't too.  
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour  
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

*Jaff.* Think not, that I to save my life come hither;  
I know its value better; but in pity  
To all those wretches, whose unhappy dooms  
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,  
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice;  
But use me as my dealings may deserve,  
And I may prove a friend.

*Duke.* The slave capitulates;  
Give him the tortures.

*Jaff.* That you dare not do:  
Your fears won't let you, nor the longing itch  
To hear a story which you dread the truth of:  
Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from me.  
Cowards are scar'd with threat'nings; boys are whipt  
Into confessions: but a steady mind  
Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.—

Give

Give him the tortures!—Name but such a thing  
Again, by Heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever;  
Nor all your racks, your engines, nor your wheels,  
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

*Duke.* Name your conditions.

*Jaff.* For myself full pardon,  
Besides the lives of two-and-twenty friends,

[*Delivers a l.*

Whose names are here enroll'd—Nay, let their crimes  
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths,  
And sacred promise of this reverend council,  
That in a full assembly of the senate  
The thing I ask be ratify'd. Swear this,  
And I'll unfold the secrets of your danger.

*Duke.* Propose the oath.

*Jaff.* By all the hopes  
You have of peace and happiness hereafter,  
Swear.

*Duke.* We swear.

*Jaff.* And, as ye keep the oath,  
May you, and your posterity be blest'd,  
Or curs'd for ever.

*Duke.* Else be curs'd for ever.

*Jaff.* Then, here's the full disclose  
Of all that threatens you.— [*Delivers another paper.*  
Now, fate, thou hast caught me.

*Duke.* Give order that all diligent search be made  
To seize these men, their characters are public.  
The paper intimates their rendezvous  
To be at the house of the fam'd Grecian courtesan,  
Call'd Aquilina; see the place secur'd. [*Exit Officer.*  
You, Jaffier, must with patience bear till morning.  
To be our prisoner.

*Jaff.* 'Would the chains of death  
Had bound me fast, e'er I had known this minute.

*Duke.* Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

*Jaff.* Sir, if possible, [me;  
Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose  
Where I may doze out what I've left of life,  
Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.  
Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee?

[*Exit Jaffier guarded.*

*Off.* [*without.*] More traitors ; room, room, make

*Duke.* How's this? [room there:]

The treason's  
Already at the doors.

*Re-enter Officer.*

*Off.* My lords, more traitors,  
Seiz'd in the very act of consultation ;  
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.—  
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter Pierre, Renault, Theodore, Elliot, Spinosa, Durand,  
Mezzana, and Guards.*

*Pier.* You, my lords, and fathers,  
(As you are pleas'd to call yourselves) of Venice ;  
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,  
Why these disgraceful chains, upon the limbs  
That have so often labour'd in your service ?  
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow  
On those that bring you conquest home, and honours ?

*Duke.* Go on ; you shall be heard, Sir.

*Pier.* Are these the trophies I've deserv'd, for fighting  
Your battles with confederated powers ?  
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you ;  
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours ;  
And you, great Duke, shrunk trembling in your palace,  
And saw your wife, the Adriatic, plough'd,  
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours ;  
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians  
The task of honour, and the way of greatness ?  
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears  
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace ?  
And this my recompence ! If I'm a traitor,  
Produce my charge ; or shew the wretch that's base  
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

*Duke.* Know you one Jaffier ?

*Pier.* Yes, and know his virtue.  
His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings  
From a hard father, taught me first to love him.

*Duke.*



*Duke.* See him brought forth.

*Enter Jaffier, guarded.*

*Pier.* My friend too bound ! nay then  
Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall.  
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine,  
They're but one thing ? These reverend tyrants, Jaffier,  
Call us traitors. Art thou one, my brother ?

*Jaff.* To thee, I am the falsest, veriest slave,  
That e'er betray'd a generous, trusting friend,  
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.  
All our fair hopes, which morning was t'have crown'd,  
Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

*Pier.* So, then all's over :  
Venice, has lost her freedom ; I my life,  
No more !

*Duke.* Say ; will you make confession  
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy ?

*Pier.* Curs'd be your senate ; curs'd your constitution :  
The curse of growing factions and divisions,  
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,  
And make the robes of government you wear  
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

*Duke.* Pardon, or death ?

*Pier.* Death ! honourable death !

*Ren.* Death's the best thing we ask, or you can give.  
No shameful bonds, but honourable death. [prisoners.

*Duke.* Break up the council. Captain, guard your  
Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment.  
[*Exeunt Duke, Senators, Conspirators, Officer, and Guards.*

*Pier.* Come, where's my dungeon ? Lead me to my  
It will not be the first time I've lodg'd hard [straw :  
To do your senate service.

*Jaff.* Hold one moment.

*Pier.* Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate ?  
Presumptuous rebel—on— [Strikes Jaffier.

*Jaff.* By Heav'n, you stir not !

[*Exeunt Captain and Guards.*

I must be heard ; I must have leave to speak.  
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow :  
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice ?

But,



VENICE PRESERV'D.

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But, use me as thou wilt, thou can'st not wrong me;  
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:  
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,  
And, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee,  
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

*Pier.* What whining monk art thou? what holy cheat,  
That would'st encroach upon my credulous ears,  
And cant'st thus vilely? Hence, I know thee not;

*Jaff.* Not know me, Pierre!

*Pier.* No, know thee not! What art thou?

*Jaff.* Jaffier, thy friend, thy once lov'd valu'd friend?  
Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd, and us'd most hardly.

*Pier.* Thou, Jaffier! thou, my once lov'd valu'd friend!  
By Heav'ns, thou ly'st; the man so call'd, my friend!  
Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant;  
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely;  
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart:  
But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,  
Poor, even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect;  
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.  
Prithee avoid; nor longer cling thus round me,  
Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

*Jaff.* I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears, I have not.

*Pier.* Hast thou not wrong'd me? Dar'st thou call thy-  
That once lov'd, valu'd friend of mine, [self  
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me? Whence these  
chains?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment?  
Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false one?

*Jaff.* All's true; yet grant one thing, and I've done

*Pier.* What's that? [asking.

*Jaff.* To take thy life, on such conditions  
The council have propos'd: thou, and thy friends,  
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

*Pier.* Life! ask my life! Confess! record myself  
A villain, for the privilege to breathe,  
And carry up and down this cursed city,  
A discontented and repining spirit,  
Burthensome to itself, a few years longer;  
To lose it, may be, at last, in a lewd quarrel  
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art!

F

No,

No, this vile world and I, have long been jangling,  
And cannot part on better terms than now,  
When only men, like thee, are fit to live in't.

*Jaff.* By all that's just——

*Pier.* Swear by some other powers,  
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

*Jaff.* Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee,  
Till, to thyself, at least, thou'rt reconcil'd,  
However thy resentments deal with me.

*Pier.* Not leave me!

*Jaff.* No; thou shalt not force me from thee.  
Ute me reproachfully, and like a slave;  
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs  
On my poor head; I'll bear it all with patience,  
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty:  
Lie at thy feet, and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me  
Till, wounded by my sufferings, thou relent,  
And raise me to thy arms, with dear forgiveness.

*Pier.* Art thou not——

*Jaff.* What?

*Pier.* A traitor?

*Jaff.* Yes.

*Pier.* A villain?

*Jaff.* Granted.

*Pier.* A coward, a most scandalous coward;  
Spiritless, void of honour; one who has sold  
Thy everlasting fame, for shameless life! [numberless,

*Jaff.* All, all, and more, much more: my faults are

*Pier.* And would'st thou have me live on terms like thine?  
Base, as thou'rt false ——

*Jaff.* No; tis to me that's granted:  
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,  
In recompence for faith and trust so broken.

*Pier.* I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee;  
And, as when first my foolish heart took pity  
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,  
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state  
Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,  
To rank thee in my list of noble friends;  
All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,  
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,

Giv'n

Given with a worthless pledge, thou since hast stol'n :  
 So I restore it back to thee again ;  
 Swearing by all those powers which thou hast violated,  
 Never from this curs'd hour, to hold communion,  
 Friendship, or interest, with thee, tho' our years  
 Where to exceed those limited the world.  
 Take it—farewell—for now I owe thee nothing.

*Jaff.* Say, thou wilt live then.

*Pier.* For my life, dispose it  
 Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I am tired with.

*Jaff.* Oh, Pierre !

*Pier.* No more.

*Jaff.* My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,  
 But languish after thine, and ake with gazing.

*Pier.* Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee  
 from me

And curses, great as is thy falshood catch thee. *Ex. Pierre*

*Jaff.* He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,  
 And here's the portion he has left me :  
 This dagger. Well remember'd ! with this dagger,  
 I gave a solemn vow, of dire importance ;  
 Parted with this, and Belvidera together.  
 Have a care, mem'ry, drive that thought no farther !  
 No, I'll esteem it, as a friend's last legacy ;  
 Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,  
 Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,  
 That, when they meet, they start not from each other.  
 So, now for thinking—A blow, call'd traitor, villain,  
 Coward, dishonourable coward ; fough !  
 Oh ! for a long sound sleep, and so forget it.  
 Down, busy devil.

*Enter Belvidera.*

*Bel.* Whither shall I fly ?  
 Where hide me and my miseries together ?  
 Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted ?  
 Sunk into trembling fears and desperation ;  
 Not daring to look up to that dear face  
 Which us'd to smile, even on my faults ; but, down  
 Bending these miserable eyes to earth,  
 Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

F 2

*Jaff.*



*Jaff.* Mercy ! kind Heav'n has, surely, endless stores  
Hoarded for thee of blessings yet untasted :—  
Let wretches, loaded hard with guilt, as I am,  
Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the burthen,  
Before the footstool of that Heav'n they've injur'd.  
Oh, Belvidera ! 'I'm the wretched'st creature  
E'er crawl'd on earth.

*Bel.* Alas ! I know thy sorrows are most mighty :

*Jaff.* My friend too, Belvidera, that dear friend,  
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,  
Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me :—  
'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

*Bel.* What has he done ?

*Jaff.* He has us'd me—But first swear,  
That, when I've told thee, thou'lt not loathe me utterly ;  
But still, at least with charitable goodness,  
Be near me in the pangs of my affliction,  
Nor scorn me, Belvidera, as he has done.

*Bel.* Tell me.

*Jaff.* Oh, my dear angel ! in that friend, I've lost  
All my soul's peace ; for every thought of him,  
Strikes my sense hard, and dead's it in my brain !—  
Would'st thou believe it ?—

Before we parted,  
E're yet his guards had led him to his prison,  
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,  
As at his feet I kneel'd, and su'd for mercy,  
With a reproachful hand, he dash'd a blow ;  
He struck me, Belvidera ! by Heav'n, he struck me !  
Buffeted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward—  
Am I a coward ? Am I a villain ? Tell me ;  
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so.—  
Damnation ! Coward !

*Bel.* Oh ! forgive him, Jaffier ;  
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,  
What will they do to-morrow ?

*Jaff.* Ah !

*Bel.* To-morrow,  
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies  
Of a tormenting and a shameful death ;

What



What will thy heart do then? Oh! sure 'twill stream,  
Like my eyes now.

*Jaff.* What means thy dreadful story?  
Death, and to-morrow!

*Bel.* The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed it:  
They say, according to our friend's request,  
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage:  
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited:  
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession,  
Warrants are pass'd for public death to-morrow.

*Jaff.* Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard! un-  
pleaded!

*Bel.* Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing  
To force confession from their dying pangs. —

Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!

How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd!

What means my love?

*Jaff.* Leave me, I charge thee, leave me——Strong  
Wake in my heart. [temptations]

*Bel.* For what?

*Jaff.* No more; but leave me.

*Bel.* Why?

*Jaff.* Oh! by Heav'n, I love thee with that fondness,  
I would not have thee stay a moment longer  
Near these curs'd hands:

[Pulls the dagger half out of his bosom, and puts it  
back gain.

Art thou not terrify'd?

*Bel.* No.

*Jaff.* Call to mind

What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought me.

*Bel.* Hah!

*Jaff.* Where's my friend? my friend, thou smiling  
Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late, [mischief!

For dire revenge

Is up, and raging for my friend.—He groans!

Hark, how he groans! his screams are in my ears!

Already, see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,

And now they tear him—Murder! Perjur'd senate!

Murder—Oh!—Hark thee, traitress, thou hast done this!

Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.

[Fumbling for his dagger]

How her eyes speak ! Oh, thou bewitching creature !  
 Madness can't hurt thee. Come, thou little trembler,  
 Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe ;  
 'Tis thy own citadel—Hah—yet stand off.  
 Heav'n must have justice, and my broken vows  
 Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy.  
 I'll wink, and then 'tis done ——

*Bel.* What means the lord  
 Of me, my life, and love ? What's in thy bosom,  
 Thou grasp'st at so ?

*[Draws the dagger, and offers to stab her.]*

Ah ! do not kill me, Jaffier ?

*Jaff.* Know, Belvidera, when we parted last,  
 I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,  
 To be thy portion if I e'er prov'd false :  
 On such condition, was my truth believ'd ;  
 But now tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

*[Offers to stab her again.]*

*Bel.* Oh ! Mercy !

*Jaff.* Nay, no struggling.

*Bel.* Now then, kill me,

*[Leaps on his neck, and kisses him.]*

While thus, I cling about thy cruel neck,  
 Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys  
 Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

*Jaff.* I am, I am a coward, witness't Heaven,  
 Witness it, earth, and every being witness !  
 'Tis but one blow ; yet, by immortal love,  
 I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.—

*[He throws away the dagger, and embraces her.]*

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee ;  
 And thou wast born for yet unheard-of wonders.—  
 Oh ! thou wert either born to save or damn me !—  
 By all the power that's given thee o'er my soul,  
 By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,  
 By thy victorious love, that still waits on thee,  
 Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,  
 Or all our future quiet's lost for ever ;  
 Fall at his feet, cling round his rev'rend knees,  
 Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears,  
 Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him ;  
 Nor, till thy prayers are granted set him free,  
 But conquer him, as thou hast vanquish'd me.

*[Exeunt.]*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

## A C T V.

SCENE, *an Apartment in Priuli's House.**Enter Priuli solus.*

PRIULI.

WHY, cruel Heav'n, have my unhappy days  
 Been lengthen'd to this sad one? Oh! dishonour  
 And deathless infamy have fall'n upon me.  
 Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.  
 But then, my only child, my daughter wedded:—  
 There my best blood runs foul, and a disease  
 Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory.

*Enter Belvidera, in a mourning veil.*

*Belv.* He's there, my father, my inhuman father,  
 That for three years has left an only child  
 Expos'd to all the outrages of fate,  
 And cruel ruin!—oh—

*Pri.* What child of sorrow  
 Art thou, that com'st wrapt up in weeds of sadness,  
 And mov'st as if thy steps were tow'rd a grave?

*Belv.* A wretch who from the very top of happiness  
 Am fallen into the lowest depths of misery,  
 And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

*Pri.* What would'st thou beg for?

*Belv.* Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*]  
 By the kind tender names of child and father,  
 Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

*Pri.* My daughter!

*Belv.* Yes, your daughter;  
 And you've oft told me,  
 With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,  
 I'd much resemblance of my mother.

*Pri.* Don't talk thus.

*Belv.* Yes, I must; and you must hear too.  
 I have a husband.

*Pri.* Damn him.

*Belv.*



*Belv.* Oh ! do not curse him ;  
He would not speak so hard a word towards you  
On any terms, howe'er he deal with me.

*Pri.* Ah ! what means my child ?

*Belv.* Oh ! my husband, my dear husband,  
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,  
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

*Pri.* Kill thee !

*Belv.* Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith  
And covenant against your state and senate,  
He gave me up a hostage for his truth :  
With me a dagger and a dire commission,  
Whenever he fail'd, to plunge it thro' this bosom.  
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love  
T' attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.  
Great love prevail'd, and blest'd me with success ;  
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends  
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to suffer,  
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,  
If they are lost, he vows t' appease the gods  
With this poor life, and make my blood th' atonement.

*Pri.* Heav'ns !

*Belv.* If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;  
Fly to the senate, save the promis'd lives  
Of his dear friends, e'er mine be made the sacrifice.

*Pri.* Oh, my heart's comfort !

*Belv.* Will you not, my father ?  
Weep not, but answer me.

*Pri.* By Heav'n I will !  
Not one of them but what shall be immortal.  
Canst thou forgive me all my follies past ?  
I'll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,  
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,  
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,  
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee.  
Peace to thy heart ! Farewell.

*Belv.* Go, and remember,  
'Tis Belvidera's life her father pleads for.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE.



SCENE II. *The Rialto.*

*Enter Captain of the Guard, leading Renault, Spinosa, Elliot, Theodore, Durand, and Mezzana, to Execution, followed by an Officer and Soldiers.*

SCENE III. *A Street.*

*Enter Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* Final destruction seize on all the world !  
Bend down, ye Heav'ns, and shutting round this earth,  
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion !

*Enter Belvidera.*

*Bel.* My life,——

*Jaff.* My plague !

*Bel.* Nay, then I see my ruin.

If I must die,——

*Jaff.* No, death's this day too busy ;  
Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late.  
I thank thee for thy labours though ; and him too ;  
But all my poor, betray'd, unhappy friends,  
Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour.—  
Yet, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,  
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy ;  
But answer me to what I shall demand,  
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

*Bel.* I will, when I've done weeping.

*Jaff.* Fie, no more on't !

How long is't since the miserable day  
We wedded first ?

*Bel.* Oh ! oh !

*Jaff.* Nay, keep in thy tears,  
Lest they unman me too.

*Bel.* Heav'n knows I cannot ;  
The words you utter sound so very sadly,  
The firearms will follow.

*Jaff.* Come, I'll kiss 'em dry then.

G

*Bel.*

*Bel.* But was't a miserable day?

*Jaff.* A curs'd one.

*Bel.* I thought it otherwise; and you've often sworn,  
When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn, you

*Jaff.* 'Twas a rash oath. [blest'd it.

*Bel.* Then why am I not curs'd too?

*Jaff.* No, Belvidera; by th' eternal truth,  
I doat with too much fondness.

*Bel.* Still so kind?

Still then do you love me?

*Jaff.* Man ne'er was blest'd,  
Since the first pair first met, as I have been.

*Bel.* Then sure you will not curse me?

*Jaff.* No, I'll blest thee;

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to blest thee.—

'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together?

*Bel.* And may no fatal minute ever part us,  
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go  
Down to one grave as our last bed, together;  
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning!

*Jaff.* Did not I say, I came to blest thee?

*Bel.* You did.

*Jaff.* Then hear me, bounteous Heav'n:  
Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,  
Where everlasting sweets are always springing,  
With a continual giving hand; let peace,  
Honour and safety, always hover round her;  
Feed her with plenty; let her eyes ne'er see  
A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning;  
Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,  
Harmless as her own thoughts; and prop her virtue,  
To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd;  
And comfort her with patience in our parting!

*Bel.* How! Parting, parting!

*Jaff.* Yes, for ever parting;  
I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon Heav'n,  
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,  
We part this hour for ever.

*Bel.* Oh! call back

Your cruel blessing; stay with me and curse me.

*Jaff.* Now hold, heart, or never.

*Bel.*

*Bel.* By all the tender days we've liv'd together  
Pity my sad condition; speak, but speak.

*Jaff.* Murder! unhold me:

Or, by th' immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his dagger.*]

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer;

Resolve, to let me go, or see me fall——

Hark, the dismal bell

[*Passing bell tolls.*]

Tolls out for death! I must attend its call too;

For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me:

He sent a message to require I'd see him

Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.

Farewell, for ever!

*Bel.* Leave thy dagger with me,

Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting?

Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

*Jaff.* Yet stay:

We have a child, as yet a tender infant;

Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone;

Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour,

But never let him know his father's story;

I charge thee guard him from the wrongs my fate

May do his future fortune, or his name.

Now—nearer yet—

Oh! that my arms were rivetted

Thus round thee ever! But my friends! my oath!

This, and no more.

*Bel.* Another, sure another,

For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of,

I'll give't him truly.

*Jaff.* So;—now farewell.

*Bel.* For ever?

*Jaff.* Heav'n knows for ever.—All good angels guard  
thee!

[*Exit Jaffier.*]

*Bel.* All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.

Oh! give me daggers, fire or water:

How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves

Huzzing and foaming round my sinking head,

Till I descended to the peaceful bottom!

Oh! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury:

The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain;

I long for thick substantial sleep. Hell! hell!  
 Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,  
 If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am.

*Exit Bel.*

SCENE IV. ST. MARKS.

*A Scaffold and Wheel prepared; Executioner, and Guards waiting round.*

*Enter Captain of the Guard and Pierre, followed by an Officer and Soldiers.*

*Pier.* My friend not yet come.

*Enter Jaffier.*

*Jaff.* Oh, Pierre! [*Falling on his knees.*

*Pier.* Dear to my arms, tho' thou'st undone my fame,  
 I can't forget to love thee. Prithee, Jaffier,  
 Forgive that filthy blow my passion dealt thee;  
 I am now preparing for the land of peace,  
 And fain would have the charitable wishes  
 Of all good men, like thee, to bless my journey.

*Cap.* The time grows short, your friends are dead already.

*Jaff.* Dead!

*Pier.* Yes, dead, Jaffier; they've all dy'd like men too,  
 Worthy their character.

*Jaff.* And what must I do?

*Pier.* Oh, Jaffier!

*Jaff.* Speak aloud thy burthen'd soul,  
 And tell thy troubles to thy tortur'd friend.

*Pier.* Friend! Could'st thou yet be a friend, a generous  
 I might hope comfort from thy noble sorrows. [*friend,*  
 Heaven knows, I want a friend.

*Jaff.* And I a kind one,  
 That would not thus scorn my repenting virtue,  
 Or think, when he's to die, my thoughts are idle.

*Pier.* No, live, I charge thee, Jaffier.

*Jaff.* Yes, I will live:  
 But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd  
 At such a rate, as Venice long shall groan for.

*Pier.* Wilt thou?

*Jaff.*



*Jaff.* I will, by Heaven.

*Pier.* Then still thou'rt noble.

And I forgive thee. Oh!—yet—shall I trust thee?

*Jaff.* No; I've been false already.

*Pier.* Dost thou love me?

*Jaff.* Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

*Pier.* Curse on this weakness!

*Jaff.* Tears! Amazement! Tears!—

I never saw thee melted thus before;

And know there's something labouring in thy bosom,

That must have vent: Tho' I'm a villain, tell me.

*Pier.* See'st thou that engine?

*Jaff.* Why?

*Pier.* Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,  
Fought nation's quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,  
Be expos'd a common carcase on a wheel?

*Jaff.* Hah!

*Pier.* Speak! Is't fitting?

*Jaff.* Fitting!

*Pier.* I'd have thee undertake  
Something that's noble, to preserve my memory  
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

*Cap.* The day grows late, Sir.

*Pier.* I'll make haste. Oh, Jaffier!

Tho' thou'lt betray'd me, do me some way justice.

*Jaff.* What's to be done?

*Pier.* This—and no more.

[*He whispers Jaffier.*]

*Jaff.* Hah! Is't then so?

*Pier.* Most certainly.

*Jaff.* I'll do't.

*Pier.* Remember.

*Capt.* Sir.

*Pier.* Come, now I'm ready.

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour;

Keep off the rabble, that I may have room

To entertain my fate, and die with decency.

You'll think on't? [*He and Jaffier ascend the scaffold.*]

*Jaff.* 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

[*Executioner having bound him.*]

*Pier.* Now, Jaffier! now I'm going. Now—

*Jaff.*

*Jaff.* Have at thee,  
Thou honest heart, then—here— [Stabs *Pierre*.  
And this is well too. [Stabs himself.

*Pier.* Now thou hast indeed been faithful.  
This was done nobly—We've deceiv'd the senate.

*Jaff.* Bravely.

*Pier.* Ha, ha, ha——oh! oh! [Dies.

*Jaff.* Now, ye curs'd rulers,  
Thus of the blood ye've shed I make libation,  
And sprinkle it mingling.—May it rest upon you,  
And all your race!—

Oh, poor Belvidera!—

Sir, I've a wife; bear this in safety to her,

A token, that with my dying breath I bless'd her,

And the dear little infant left behind me.—

I'm sick—I'm quiet. [Dies.

*The Scene shuts upon them.*

## SCENE, V.

*An Apartment in Priuli's House.*

*Enter Belvidera distracted, led by two of her women,  
and Priuli.*

*Pri.* Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying Heav'n!

*Bel.* Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to bed,  
Prithee, my love. The winds: hark how they whistle;  
And the rain beats; Oh, how the weather shrinks me!

I say you shall not go, you shall not,

Whip your ill-nature; get you gone then; Oh!

Are you return'd? See, father, here he's come again:

Am I to blame to love him? O, thou dear one.

Why do you fly me? Are you angry still then?

*Jaffer*, where art thou? father why do you do thus?

Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's there somewhere.

Stand off, I say: What gone? Remember't, tyrant:

I may revenge myself for this trick, one day.

*Enter*

*Enter Captain of the Guard.*

*Pri.* News, what news?

*Cap.* Most sad, Sir;

Jaffier, upon the scaffold, to prevent  
A shameful death, stabb'd Pierre, and next himself:  
Both fell together.

*Bel.* Ha! look there!

My husband bloody and his friend too! Murder!  
Who has done this? Speak to me, thou sad vision;  
On these poor trembling knees I beg it. Vanish'd—  
Here they went down—Oh, I'll dig, dig the den up!—  
Hoe, Jaffier, Jaffier.

Peep up, and give me but a look.—I have him!

I've got him, father: Oh!

My love! my dear! my blessing! help me! help me!

They have hold of me, and drag me to the bottom;

Nay—now they pull so hard—farewell— [Dies.

*Pri.* Oh!

Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning;

Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun,

May never enter; hang it round with black;

Set up one taper, that may light a day,

As long as I've to live; and there all leave me:

Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,

But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate. [Exeunt Omnes.

END OF THE FIFTH ACT.